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ABSTRACT

A systems approach is used to show how changes in the design of English training programs for training international teaching assistants (ITA) have affected curriculum design. The approach is described, and three phases of curriculum development are outlined: initial design, ongoing reform, and radical renewal. The history of ITA program design since the 1970s is briefly reviewed for changes in the system as a whole, in program purpose and mission, in measures of the system's performance, in resource allocation, and in system boundaries. It is concluded that much progress has been made in a short period, including a more proactive approach, more specific aims, improved quality and quantity of offerings to ITAs, and expansion of the boundaries of ITA training activities. A need for additional work in this area is seen, based on five persistent problem areas: lack of a model for effective ITA training, inadequate program evaluation, doubts about the validity of a commonly-used language proficiency test, neglect of the ITA's roles other than as lecturer, and whether American undergraduates' attitudes toward racial stereotypes affect their comprehension of ITAs. A 45-item bibliography is appended. (MSE)

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Curriculum Renewal in Training Programs for International Teaching Assistants[1]

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Running head: CURRICULUM RENEWAL IN ITA TRAINING PROGRAMS

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A Systems-analytic Approach to Curriculum Design

In recent years, much has been written by teachers, researchers, and administrators concerning the design and development of instructional curricula for second and foreign language teaching programs, and in particular for English as a second or foreign language (e.g., Brumfit, 1984; Clark, 1987; Johnson, 1989; Nunan, 1988; White, 1988; Young & Lee, 1985). The present contribution to this considerable body of literature is concerned with some aspects of the design and development of curricula in one aspect of English as a second language--training programs for international teaching assistants (ITAs). The approach to curriculum design taken in this paper--a relatively new one I believe--is from the perspective of applied systems analysis. The systems-analytical perspective that I will use is that developed by Peter Checkland at the University of Lancaster and published in two articles in the *Journal of Applied Systems Analysis* (Checkland, 1979a, b).

Checkland argues that systems analysis and, in particular, the systems diagrams that we are familiar with as flow charts which show the steps in the operation of computer programs or the organization charts which show functional relations in an institutional bureaucracy are particularly good at showing the connections between components of human activity systems. Human activity systems, says Checkland, are wholes characterized by the connections between their component parts. These multiple connections and relationships are more easily shown in diagrams than described in prose, for a reader of a prose description has to process information serially and this places a much greater burden on memory when the description is concerned with relationships between components of a system. Systems diagrams, on the other hand, show complex relationships among components simultaneously, making the task of understanding the system considerably easier.

Checkland also distinguishes between, on the one hand, the "hard" systems which are most often the concern of professional systems analysts and which attempt to solve well-defined problems and, on the other hand, "soft" systems which are applied to the ill-structured problems which characterize situations perceived as problematic in the social world. One such "soft" systems problem is that of the design and implementation of instructional curricula and one specific application of Checkland's ideas in this area is the program designed by Candlin (1984) for reform of the English as a foreign language curriculum in the public instructional systems in the West German state of Hesse.

For the purposes of this presentation, I would like to borrow Checkland's generalized model of a "Human Activity System" and apply it to the task of curriculum design, reform, and renewal in ITA training programs. The model attempts to describe in a generalized way how taking purposeful action in pursuit of a goal must take into account the system's purpose or mission, its environment, the nature of the decision-making available, and the kind of monitor and control action which is possible given the system's resources and sub-systems. It should be noted that the model is a first approximation to one abstract representation of the problem. That is to say, it is one person's interpretation of a situation with which most ESL program directors are familiar. Because the model makes explicit my own interpretation of the problem, it may also serve as a basis for debate and discussion of differing interpretations of the same problem.

Insert Figure 1 about here

In Figure 1 each of the round boxes encloses a noun referring to a component of the system and the lines drawn between the boxes show the relationship among these nouns by means of transitive verbs, prepositions, and subordinate clauses. In this way, each pathway through the system diagram is a sentence or phrase describing the system.

If we replace the general nouns in this model with the particular nouns which refer to the problem of curriculum design for ITA training programs, we will have a working model of the problem at hand. The problem itself is defined explicitly in a root definition, which may be formulated as follows:

> *An ITA training system (S) is a professionally-manned system concerned with the overall management of ITA training so that by this management the system may make the best possible contribution to learning on the part of undergraduate students assigned to an ITA.*

Thus, the box enclosing the wider systems of S may be interpreted as the three participants identified by Bailey (1984) as (a) the university faculty and administration, (b) the undergraduate students and their parents, and (c) the international teaching assistants themselves. To Bailey's three may perhaps be added today's state legislatures who discuss or enact legislation concerning international teaching assistants in the universities within their jurisdiction. In Checkland's model the wider systems of S are a given over which the system has no control.

The wider systems of S make known their demands on S and their view of its role to the decision-taker or decision-takers of S. These actors are the program directors, the ITA training program coordinators, and others whose responsibility it is to solve the problem. The decision-takers of S are aware of the purpose or mission of the system, which in terms of the ITA training program was defined in the root definition as "to make the best possible contribution to learning on the part of undergraduate students assigned to an ITA." The decision-takers of S are also aware of the effectiveness of the system in achieving the goals stated in the mission through measures of performance of S. In practice, this measurement is often carried out either by evaluation of the ITA program by the participants or external evaluators, or alternatively by evaluation of the participants in order to establish whether they have met the goals set for them by the program designers.

The information derived from these measures of performance serves as the basis for a monitor and control subsystem within the overall system. This monitor and control subsystem is what we have so far been calling curriculum reform or curriculum renewal, and at this point I would like to draw a distinction between these terms. *Curriculum reform* may be viewed as an ongoing process which may occur between one year's session of the ITA training program and the next. It is based on feedback obtained from the measures of performance of the program. Curriculum reform, then, consists of modifications to an

existing curriculum. *Curriculum renewal*, on the other hand, involves a complete redesign of the curriculum on the basis of significant changes in the environments of the system.

In Checkland's model the environments of S are those factors which the decision-takers monitor and attempt to influence. In ITA training programs these environments may be viewed as consisting of the knowledge base of theory and practice concerning ITA training programs which the decision-takers in each program monitor and, to a greater or lesser degree, influence. Curriculum renewal, then, occurs when this knowledge environment changes to such a degree that a complete redesign of the curriculum is felt to be necessary. Such renewal may also affect the purpose or mission of the program, which is not affected by curriculum reform.

While the right-hand side of the diagram represents the monitor and control subsystem, the lower central part of the diagram represents the operational subsystem--how, that is, resources are allocated among the different components of S and how these components are designed and interconnected. This, in terms of ITA training, may be taken to represent the actual components of the curriculum such as the intelligibility component, the teaching practice component, and so on, as well as the physical and human resources such as instructional materials, classrooms, and the instructors themselves. Such resources may be allocated and reallocated in new ways in a process of reform or renewal of the curriculum. However, the reallocation of resources and the reconfiguration of operational subsystems is likely to change more drastically if the process is one of renewal rather than if it is one of reform.

Finally, the boundary of the system is defined by the area of authority of the system's decision-takers, which may be defined in turn by the demands placed upon them by the wider systems. In terms of the ITA example, the areas of operation of an ITA training program may be limited by university administrators and departmental faculty to the orientation or seminar programs organized by the English language program. The area of authority of the ITA program staff may exclude visits to actual classes taught by international teaching assistants or advice to departmental chairpersons on teaching assignments. On the other hand, the English language program may be seen as competent in these areas, which then become part of the system. Indeed, the boundary of the system may change as a result of the success (or lack of success) that participants in the wider systems perceive the program as having in the achievement of its goals.

The systems diagram that we have used to model the problem of curriculum design in ITA training programs can also be seen to comprise three essential subsystems. First, the model contains a monitor and control subsystem, represented by the right-hand side of the diagram. As we saw, this subsystem monitors the effectiveness of the system in achieving its goals and the goals themselves are reexamined in the light of changes in the knowledge environment. Second, in the operational subsystem, represented in the lower central part of the diagram, the system's decision takers receive the information produced by the monitor and control subsystem and allocate resources in order to achieve the best possible contribution to learning on the part of undergraduates assigned to international teaching assistants. The operations of this subsystem include establishment of different components

within the curriculum, allocation of resources among them and definition of connections among the different curriculum components. Finally, what Checkland calls an "Awareness" subsystem must exist in order for the decision-takers to be cognizant of the relevant information inputs into the system. The "Awareness" sub-system ensures that the program director and ITA program coordinator are aware of relevant information regarding the views and demands of the university administration, departmental faculty, undergraduates and their parents, and the international teaching assistants themselves. These decision takers must also be aware of the knowledge environment, that is, both the information concerning the evaluation of their own program and also the theory and practice of similar programs at other institutions.[2] Finally, the program director and the ITA program coordinator must also be aware of the boundary of their system as defined by their own area of authority.

The model presented here is a first approximation to the problem of curriculum design in ITA training programs. We may find such a model useful as an overview of a complex system, of which until now we have only perceived parts and have been only dimly aware of the relations among them. However, as a first approximation, the model that has been presented does not give us any concrete information regarding how, in practice, to go about solving the problem of the design, reform, or renewal of a curriculum for an actual ITA training program. In order to do that we need to take a closer look at the individual components of the system.

Three Phases in the Life of a Curriculum

Concern over international teaching assistants is not a new phenomenon and the curricula for ITA training programs may be seen to go through three phases during their life cycle: (a) the initial design phase; (b) the phase of ongoing curriculum reform; and, in the case of some programs, (c) an effort at radical renewal of the existing curriculum. For a decade now, U.S. universities have attempted to prepare international teaching assistants for work in university classrooms and laboratories. Many of these programs were initially designed in response to complaints by students and their parents that lessons taught by TAs from abroad were unintelligible. The initial design effort was motivated therefore by these concerns and the demands put on English language programs and offices of instructional development by these wider systems. The second phase in the life of an ITA curriculum is reform of the curriculum based on feedback received from the monitor and control system. Rice (1984), for example, describes an ITA training program begun in 1978 at SUNY Buffalo, the initial design of which included major components designed to promote aural/oral skills, reading/writing skills, and skills in cross-cultural communication. Rice comments that the design of the program had to be modified on the basis of feedback from the international teaching assistants themselves:

> The syllabus had been designed according to what we thought the TAs' needs would be. However the needs analysis results made it apparent that the foreign TAs had many concerns which had to be addressed immediately. Most of the modifications involved the sequencing of materials in the various components (e.g., an earlier and greater emphasis on cross-cultural problems),

> rather than changes in actual course content. However, the requirement for the course participants to write a research paper was dropped, although the concept was discussed thoroughly. (Rice, 1984, p. 71)

The curriculum reform described by Rice involved changing the connectivity among the subsystems of the curriculum (resequencing the components) and reallocating resources among the subsystems (dispensing with the research paper requirement).

The third phase in the life of a curriculum--curriculum renewal--occurs, as was discussed above, when the knowledge environment changes to such a degree that a complete redesign of the curriculum is felt to be necessary. The majority of ITA training programs organized by U.S. colleges and universities have been in place now for a number of years and have been subjected to a number of cycles of curriculum reform based on feedback received from the international teaching assistants themselves and other interested parties. Perhaps now is the time to consider whether the current knowledge environment is sufficiently different from the state of our knowledge when most of these programs were set up to merit a complete renewal of ITA curricula. This will be the concern of the remaining part of this paper.

Curricula for ITA Training Programs

In 1984 NAFSA published a collection of papers entitled *Foreign Teaching Assistants in U.S. Universities*, (Bailey, Pialorsi & Zukowski/Faust, 1984). The 11 papers in that collection described very well the state of the art in the design and evaluation of ITA training programs in the early 1980s. The majority of papers in the NAFSA collection describe the initial design phase of curricula in response to what was, at that time, a relatively new problem.

Five years later, in 1989, a second collection of papers on ITA training appeared as a special issue of the journal *English for Specific Purposes* (Young, 1989). The eight articles in that collection, which were originally presented as papers at the Symposium on the Training of International Teaching Assistants held at the University of Pennsylvania in April 1988, describe the state of the art in ITA training programs today. It is an interesting exercise to compare the two collections to see just how far our knowledge environment has changed over the past five years.

Returning to the model of curriculum design put forward earlier, I would like to compare these 1984 and 1989 volumes in terms of the components (the round boxes) of the systems analysis diagram in Figure 1. In other words, I will attempt to show what changes can be perceived over the past five years in the following five areas: (a) in the wider systems influencing ITA training programs, (b) in the purpose and mission of the programs, (c) in measures of the system's performance, (d) in the allocation of resources to the system and within its subsystems, and (e) in the boundary of the system itself.

Changes in the wider systems. Let us first consider what changes have occurred over the period in the wider systems. Bailey in the 1984 NAFSA volume identifies, as we have seen, the university, the students and their parents, and the international teaching assistants

themselves as participants in the wider systems who make known their demands on the directors of ITA training programs. In the 1989 ESP volume, however, several articles mention a new participant--state legislatures such as those of Florida and Illinois who mandate that universities receiving state funds should ensure the spoken English proficiency of international teaching assistants.

One interesting feature of the discussion of wider systems in the *ESP* special is attempts, such as that at the University of Delaware described by Stevens to influence undergraduates' perceptions of international teaching assistants by involving undergraduates directly in the ITA training program. Stevens mentions that American undergraduates "acted as coaches, speech and gesture models, vocabulary and slang sources, and co-performers in various mini-performances that were reviewed and critiqued" (Stevens, 1989, p. 187). Several other authors have proposed that American undergraduates should be viewed as part of the "Foreign TA Problem". Zukowski/Faust, for example, in the 1984 NAFSA volume suggests that American undergraduate stereotypes of foreigners can cause problems for international teaching assistants. However, the solution she suggests to those problems makes clear that responsibility for action lies solely with the international teaching assistants for, as she says, "foreign TAs must be prepared to adopt the perceived behaviors of leadership and to remove themselves from their physical stereotypes" (Zukowski/Faust, 1984, p. 86). Meanwhile, other writers such as Orth (1983) and Brown (in preparation) have indicated that American undergraduates own part of the foreign TA problem, since it is the reactions of these individuals to ethnic stereotypes which has been claimed to be part of the cause of communication problems. Solutions, such as that implemented by Stevens in involving undergraduates as active participants in the ITA training program therefore represent a significant new departure in attempting to bring within the ITA training system an important group of participants who had until recently been treated as external to it.

Changes in the purpose and mission of ITA programs. Turning now to changes in the purpose and mission of the programs, several papers in the 1984 NAFSA volume describe curricula for ITA training programs rather different from the curricula common in today's programs. Gaskill and Brinton (1984) describe a program at U.C. Irvine which was designed for both TA and non-TA international graduate students. Bailey and Hinofotis (1984) describe a workshop which was designed not for international teaching assistants at all but for foreign visiting professors. Rice (1984) describes a program which has as its goal to improve oral/aural and reading/writing skills of international teaching assistants both in their roles as teaching assistants and as graduate students. In contrast, papers in Young (1989) all describe programs which were designed specifically to help international teaching assistants perform better in their roles as TAs. The focus of the latter collection is much more narrow than that found in the earlier papers and visiting scholars and non-TA international graduate students are, by implication, excluded from contemporary ITA programs.

In addition, the papers in the NAFSA volume dealing with the problems which international teaching assistants face in communicating in spoken English focus exclusively

on the oral presentations that international teaching assistants are likely to make in their roles as classroom instructors. While this role is still an important one for contributors to the 1989 volume, it is now realized that this is not the only problem in oral communication which international teaching assistants have to face. Davies, Tyler, and Koran (1989), for example, deal extensively with spoken communication in another area of ITA duties--the communication skills used in one-on-one exchanges with American English speakers in office-hour encounters. In doing so, Davies and her colleagues expand the purpose and mission of ITA programs into an important area which until recently has not been explored.

There are further differences in the theoretical approaches to the design of ITA training programs taken by authors in the NAFSA and *ESP* volumes. The approach underlying most of the earlier course design is that a training course for international teaching assistants is an instance of a program in English for specific purposes (Shaw and Garate, 1984, p. 22). In this approach, based on the work of Mager (1972, 1975) in defining instructional objectives and Munby's (1978) ideas concerning communicative syllabus design, the target performance of the course participants is defined in linguistic and behavioral terms. However, in the 1989 *ESP* volume, ironically the ESP approach to ITA program design is criticized by Boyd, who argues that instruction should not be restricted to job-related skills. She points out that ITA programs are part of the professional development of future university professors and researchers, a point underscored by Kaplan's statistic in the same volume that 15% of the faculty at the University of Southern California consist of international students who stayed on.

Boyd proposes a "professional education" approach to ITA program design, arguing that this approach differs from an ESP approach in three important ways: first, professional education has broad, long-range goals rather than aiming to provide answers to immediate job-related problems; second, rather than leaving it to program designers and instructors to provide model solutions to the problems that ITAs will face, professional education of ITAs focuses on "reflection in action"--that is, it helps develop an ability to reflect and act on a broad range of educational problems rather than a narrowly defined body of skills and knowledge; finally, a professional education approach gives students the opportunity to try out their future professional roles through a period of internship in a sheltered environment. Boyd's challenge to the ESP approach reminds us that detailed analysis of the language and behavior appropriate to a specific situation is not necessarily the best way to prepare students to face the unexpected challenges of that situation.

Another contribution to the ESP volume which departs from the traditional ESP approach to course design is Stevens' innovative way of using drama techniques to improve the intelligibility of ITAs in the classroom. Stevens (1989) rejects approaches to the problem of pronunciation improvement which use conventional means of instruction in articulation and segmental phonology through explicit linguistic analysis and repetition. Stevens argues that it is the suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation--stress, linking, rhythm, fluency, and projection--which are the basis of many segmental errors. He proposes a methodology for teaching pronunciation and nonverbal communication based on established techniques used in the training of actors. He argues that drama training techniques are effective not only in

eliminating errors in articulation, but also in helping ITAs to develop the culturally alien persona (the actor's mask in the original Latin sense of the word) of a teacher in an American university classroom. Such techniques focus on establishing mutual trust in a group, developing a stage voice, intensive observation of American professors and students, building energy into a performance, developing concentration, encouraging spontaneity and creativity, and blocking the ITA's movements in the classroom.

Those papers in the *ESP* volume which continue to maintain an approach involving the specification of target behaviors as a goal of ITA program design do so in ways which are far more detailed and broader in scope than the papers in the NAFSA volume. The most complete list of target behaviors for ITAs in the NAFSA volume is Gaskill and Brinton's list of seven areas:

1. Organizing and presenting brief talks related to the student's major field;
2. Asking and answering questions based on such presentations;
3. Comprehending university lectures;
4. Taking notes on university lecture material;
5. Preparing for multiple choice and essay type exams based on such material;
6. Communicating with student peers and professors in an academic framework;
7. Adjusting culturally to the immediate academic and non-academic environment. (Gaskill & Brinton, 1984, p. 61)

However, Douglas and Myers in the *ESP* volume list 21 communication strategies within Gaskill and Brinton's single area #1 of "organizing and presenting brief talks." The greater specificity of teaching behaviors in the Douglas and Myers article bears witness to the considerable increase in our understanding of classroom discourse and interaction over the past several years.[3]

In addition to the greater specificity of objectives by Douglas and Myers, Ard's paper in the *ESP* special attempts to broaden the range of desirable target behaviors for ITAs in the classroom by reviewing the literature on the correlates of successful teaching at the college level by native-speaking instructors, much of which has received scant attention in previous discussions of ITA training. There are, however, in this literature several pertinent findings, including lists of teaching skills found desirable by students, a discussion of the different ways in which a teacher asserts power in the classroom, and a list of 40 communication traits which have been claimed to be characteristic of effective teachers. In addition to the skills of a good teacher, Ard also discusses the presuppositional theory of discourse proposed by Habermas and the discourse features of "rightness" and "sincerity" which contribute to the successful discourse of good teachers. Ard argues that a major task facing ITA trainers is to help ITAs convey the culturally expected social norms of interaction and presentation of self both in the classroom and in office-hour consultations.

Changes in measures of the system's performance. Turning now to changes over the past five years in measures of performance of the system, we note that the ITA programs described in the NAFSA volume use several criteria for admission to the programs, but no exit criteria are mentioned. Turitz (1984), for example, mentions that scores on TOEFL, the Test of Spoken English (TSE), and the Michigan Test of English Proficiency were used to screen candidates for admission to some programs. In addition, Gaskill and Brinton's program at U.C. Irvine used the UCLA ESL Proficiency Exam. Stansfield and Ballard (1984) argue that TSE is a better measure of the spoken English proficiency required of ITAs than TOEFL and also that it has good concurrent validity when compared with the Foreign Service oral proficiency interview. Despite the availability of these testing instruments, however, the directors of many of the programs surveyed by Turitz insist that they admit all current and prospective ITAs.

Nowadays, of course, TSE and its institutional version--the Spoken English Assessment Kit or SPEAK--are very widely used in screening candidates for ITA training programs and a criterion score on SPEAK is considered by many programs (and by some state legislatures) as good enough evidence of competence to teach undergraduates through the medium of English as a second language. In the *ESP* volume Stevens mentions that Delaware has an exit criterion of 250 on SPEAK, Davies reports that Florida requires 220, and Kaplan reports that USC accepts a score between 200 and 230 as evidence of competence to assume restricted classroom duties, whereas a score of 240 or above is the requirement for full ITA duties.

In the NAFSA volume there is no indication of any exit criterion for ITA programs and simple completion of the program appears to have been enough to ensure a TA stipend for international students. However, Bailey (1984) argues in favor of performance testing of ITAs in addition to oral proficiency testing.

> In a performance test, the examinee must demonstrate his ability to use his English language skills in the same way they will be used on the job. In the case of foreign TAs, such a test might include a videotaped role play in which the candidate must explain subject-specific terms to a class of students, entertain questions, check the students' understanding of the concept, deal with an interruption, make a homework assignment, and end the lesson [...]. A panel composed of faculty members, experienced TAs, and undergraduate students could then rate the candidate's performance. (Bailey, 1984, p. 13)

Bailey's requirements for performance testing appear to be met by two tests mentioned in the *ESP* special. Douglas and Myers, Smith, and Stevens all mention using the TEACH test (the acronym stands for Taped Evaluation of Assistants' Classroom Handling) developed by Abraham and her colleagues at Iowa State University (Abraham & Plakans, 1986, 1988; Abraham et al., 1988). The TEACH test consists of a microteaching task designed to simulate the interlocutors, tasks, and topics of the actual teaching situation. Stevens also mentions using the Instructional Development and Effectiveness Assessment or IDEA developed by Kansas State University and designed to evaluate university instruction based

on students' self-ratings of progress made on teacher-stated learning objectives (Stevens, 1989, p. 191).

To summarize, then, measures of system performance have been considerable refined over the past five years. From systems which had no formal evaluation of performance in 1984 we now have the almost universal adoption of TSE and SPEAK as accepted measures of the competence of ITAs to operate in the classroom, together with the development of new and more appropriate measures of classroom performance.

Remarkably little progress appears to have been made, however, in the development of measures of the effectiveness of the programs themselves (rather than the ITAs). In the NAFSA volume Landa and Perry describe how they conducted a case study to evaluate the effectiveness of the ITA training program at the University of Minnesota, but it is difficult to generalize such a procedure to other programs. In the *ESP* special, both Douglas and Myers and Stevens make brief mention of evaluating the programs at Iowa State and Delaware by means of comparing mean pre- and post-course scores on SPEAK and other tests. Besides these passing mentions there seems to be, now as then, no generally agreed upon way of evaluating the success of ITA training programs.

Changes in allocation of resources to the system and within its subsystems. Turning now to changes over the past five years in the way in which resources are allocated to ITA training programs and also within the components of the programs, we note that today's programs have considerably more hours of instruction, and a greater diversity of course offerings than was apparent five years ago.

In the NAFSA volume, Turitz (1984) mentions two basic types of ITA training programs: the seminar type which meets for between one and six hours per week during the semester, and intensive orientation-type programs which were held for between one day (Bailey & Hinofotis, 1984) and one week (Gaskill & Brinton, 1984) before the start of the academic year.

In the ESP special Kaplan mentions that U.S.C. currently offers a four-week intensive program in August followed by two credit courses in Spoken Communication and Language and Pedagogy during the fall semester. Davies and her colleagues at the University of Florida offer three semester-long courses: Academic Spoken English I and II, and Academic Spoken English Tutorial. Stevens mentions that the intelligibility component of the Delaware ITA program alone meets for a total of 40 hours during August.

As far as instructional materials are concerned, in the 1984 NAFSA volume Turitz mentions four types of materials used on the ITA training programs of the time. Published textbooks intended for general purpose ESL courses such as *Beyond language* (Levine & Adelman, 1982), *Improving spoken English* (Morley, 1979), and *Gambits* (Keller & Warner, 1979) were used on some courses. Other published materials designed for a non-ESL audience are also mentioned. These include *Public speaking: A guide to message preparation* by G. R. Rodman (1978) and McKeachie's *Teaching tips: A guidebook for the beginning college teacher* (7th edition, 1978). Some courses made use of the Gumperz, Jupp, and Roberts *Crosstalk* film (1979). However, the materials most often mentioned in 1984 were

those prepared by teachers themselves for use in their own programs, including videotapes of practice teaching sessions involving American and international TAs.

Five years on, although teacher-made materials still appear to be widely used, there now exist published ESL materials specifically designed for ITA training programs such as Byrd, Constantinides, and Pennington's *The foreign teaching assistant's manual* (1988), Barnes' book *The American university* (1984), and Pica, Barnes, and Finger's *Teaching Matters* (1990). Video-based materials for ITA training programs are also being circulated widely. For example, the materials described by Douglas and Myers (1989) are available from the authors at Iowa State on a set of three tapes.

To summarize, then, the typical ITA program of today has more hours of instruction covering a broader range of topics than the ITA program of five years ago. The increased specificity of aims in today's programs that was noted above has also resulted in the professional production of instructional texts and videos which deal specifically and in detail with the problems facing ITAs.

Changes in the boundary of the system. The final issue which I would like to consider is how the boundary of the system has changed. Or, to put the question in the way suggested by Checkland's description: Has the area of authority of English language program directors and ITA program coordinators been widened or diminished over the past five years? A description of how the boundary of one program has widened is included in Kaplan's contribution to the 1989 *ESP* special. Kaplan describes two incarnations of the ITA training program at the University of Southern California. The first was:

> a summer course which ran sporadically between 1980 and 1986 on a voluntary basis and without any special support. It was not well attended because students did not generally arrive early enough to take advantage of it and because financial support was minimal. (p. 116)

The second incarnation of the program, however, shows much greater participation in the program by the university administration:

> In May 1987, following a quick survey of the probable situation in all departments recruiting international teaching assistants, the Graduate School announced that there would be a four-week course in August for all new international TAs who could be brought to campus in time. The Graduate School absorbed all instructional costs and provided a stipend of $600 to each participant to cover living expenses during the four-week course; it also guaranteed the availability of low cost housing on campus for that period. [...] At the end of August, all participants were tested with SPEAK, and the test results were communicated to the departments in time for decisions to be made prior to the assignment of TAs to fall 1987 courses. (pp. 117-118)

It seems that ITA training programs provide an excellent opportunity for English language programs to become a more integral part of the universities and colleges to which they belong. If well designed and well managed, ITA training programs have a way of

enhancing the reputation of the English language program on campus and can contribute significantly to an increase in the service role that the English language program provides.

Conclusions: Future Developments in ITA Program Design

The preceding review of changes in ITA programs in the short period since the publication of the NAFSA volume on *Foreign Teaching Assistants in U.S. Universities* has shown that we have come a very long way in a very short time. The proactive stance of some programs in attempting to influence the attitudes of American undergraduates towards ITAs is a decided improvement over the earlier panic reaction to these students' complaints. The developments in our understanding of conversational and classroom discourse and interaction have allowed designers of ITA curricula to greatly increase the specificity of their aims. With a realization of the complexity of the problems ITAs face has come a greater allocation of resources to ITA programs: The current offerings by many programs are greater both in quantity and diversity than they were five years ago, and the published instructional materials available today are designed specifically for use on ITA programs. Finally, as we have seen, the boundary of activity of many ITA programs has expanded to include formal relations with officers of the Graduate School and with department chairs, in which the English language program director and ITA program coordinator have an advisory role in the formulation of policy with regard to ITAs and other international students on campus. Program directors should consider whether these changes in the knowledge environment of ITA training systems have been significant enough to merit a complete curriculum renewal if their programs still retain the basic features of the programs described in 1984.

However, there is much work which still needs to be done in research and development of ITA curricula. In the recent spate of scholarship and development it is possible to perceive five trends that, if pursued may lead to even more effective ITA training in the future. First, as Ard (1989) has pointed out, despite a wealth of research into the effectiveness (or lack of it) of college teaching by native English-speaking instructors, no model of effective teaching has been proposed for ITAs. As a result, ITA training programs often lack clear goals regarding what successful ITA teaching behavior should look like. Second, apart from the Landa and Perry (1984) paper describing an evaluation of the ITA training program at the University of Minnesota, I have been unable to find any other published reports of evaluations of ITA training programs. Since, as we have seen, the goals of ITA training can now be specified in a fairly detailed way, there is room for considerable further research into how far those goals are achieved by particular programs. Third, despite the fact that the Educational Service's Test of Spoken English in the form of the SPEAK test is nowadays almost universally adopted as a measure of the spoken English proficiency of ITAs, there remain considerable doubts as to whether this test is a valid measure of the particular kind of skills required by the communicative interactions in which ITAs are involved (Smith, 1989). The SPEAK test is essentially a measure of the comprehensibility of candidates' spoken English, and while this might be regarded as a valid test of spoken English in a lecture style presentation, it does not assess how well a candidate

interacts with English speakers; how well, that is, an ITA can understand students' questions or operate in a more interactive environment such as a lab section or seminar. Fourth, most discussion of ITA issues (with the notable exception of Davies, Tyler, & Koran, 1989) has focused almost exclusively on the ITA's role as lecturer, whereas, in fact, the ITA plays a number of other roles which impact just as much on the quality of undergraduate education. At the University of Pennsylvania, for example, very few ITAs act as the primary instructors for undergraduate courses; they do, however, lead recitation sections, conduct labs, and advise undergraduates during office-hour appointments. Current research has very little to say concerning what we should expect of effective ITAs in these less formal instructional settings. Finally, now that some more innovative programs are involving undergraduates in their ITA training, there is more than ever a need for research into the question of whether American undergraduates' attitudes toward racial stereotypes affect their comprehension of ITAs, and if so, how. For too long, we have looked at only one side of the communicative problems in interactions between international teaching assistants and native speaking undergraduates. It is now time for a more balanced approach to the problem.

A research agenda including these five areas of need may lead to more effective ITA training programs in the future:

- The need for a theoretically grounded model of effective instruction by ITAs
- The need for research into the evaluation of ITA training programs
- The need for a valid and reliable test of interactive spoken English proficiency for ITAs
- The need to investigate and describe roles for ITAs besides that of lecturer
- The need to investigate native speaking undergraduates' contributions to communication failures in interactions with ITAs

This paper has presented a systems-analytic model of ITA program design and described the remarkable progress which has been made over the past five years in our understanding of different components of that model. We look forward to further research and development along the lines which have been sketched in this article, for there is much work still to be done.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Workshop on Curriculum Development organized by the Consortium of University and College Intensive English Programs (UCIEP) held in Minneapolis, MN, on June 3, 1989.

2. One could argue that the activity which readers of this article are engaged in forms part of this "Awareness" subsystem.

3. See Chaudron (1988) and van Lier (1988) for summaries of this research.

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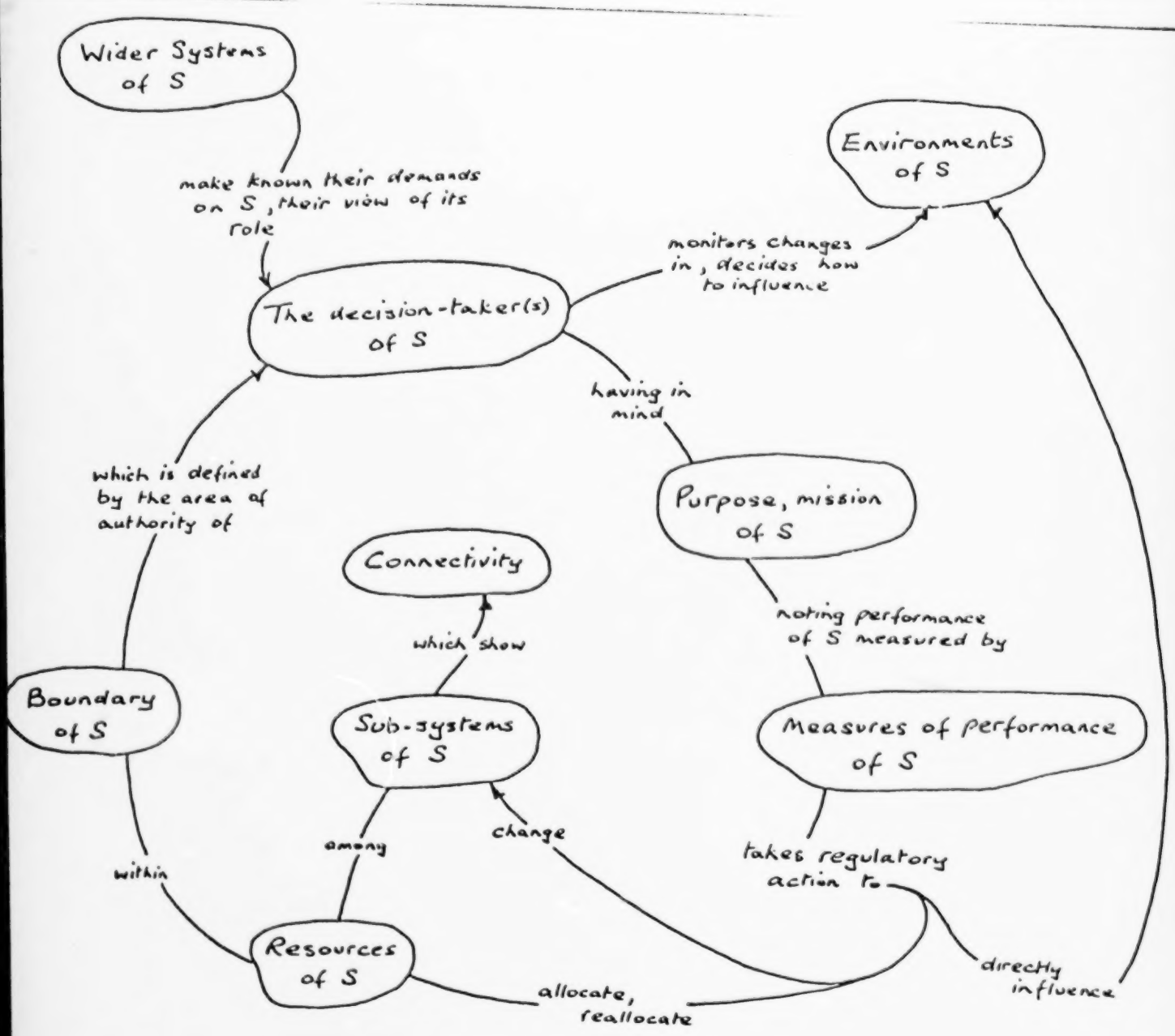

Figure 1. A Model of the 'Human Activity System' (from Checkland, 1979a)